Faith, Society, and the 21st Century: A Biblical Worldview Analysis of Global Trends (2000–2025)

Sixbert Sangwa*

Center for Faith and Work, Kigali, Rwanda
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.16841368 ||| *Email*: ssangwa@openchristian.education*

Abstract: This article offers an integrative, secondary-data synthesis of the most consequential global shifts from 2000 to 2025 through a Sola Scriptura lens. **Purpose:** to evaluate how concurrent changes in religion and culture, politics and conflict, economics and poverty, science and technology, and environmental stewardship cohere or conflict with biblical anthropology and ethics, and to derive practice-relevant guidance for discipleship and institutional leadership. **Methodology**: an integrative review couples a structured evidence matrix of reputable datasets with canonical, Christ-centered theological analysis; sources were selected for transparency, recency, and cross-regional coverage, then synthesized narratively with explicit appraisal of ethical assumptions. **Results:** findings show a marked south-and-eastward shift in Christian demography alongside accelerating secularization in the West; rapid liberalization in sexuality and life ethics with persistent counter-movements; the resurgence of religion in identity politics and a documented rise in persecution; historic reductions in extreme poverty tempered by widening within-country inequality; frontier advances in AI and biotechnology that enlarge human capacity while heightening risks to dignity and agency; and continued warming and ecological stress that sharpen stewardship obligations. **Contribution:** the study proposes an interpretive framework rooted in creation, fall, redemption, and consummation that explains the simultaneous expansion of Christianity and consolidation of Western secularism, and it articulates biblically grounded implications for technology governance, economic justice, public witness, and creation care. **Conclusions and implications:** the first quarter-century demands theological clarity joined to empirical sobriety. Christians are called to wise cultural engagement that prizes truth, protects the vulnerable, resists technocratic hubris, and practices hopeful stewardship. Limitations include dependence on available datasets and fast-moving indicators, underscoring the need for periodic updates.

Keywords: Sola Scriptura; Global Christianity; Secularization; Religious nationalism; AI ethics; Global poverty and inequality; Creation care.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background: The first quarter of the 21st century has been marked by rapid global change – socially, politically, and spiritually. Between 2000 and 2025, the world has witnessed seismic shifts: the rise of a connected global economy, revolutionary technological advances, realignments of political power, and deep cultural transformations. Amid these changes, questions of truth, meaning, and morality have become more pronounced. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of key global trends from 2000 to 2025 through multiple lenses (historical, sociopolitical, and philosophical), while ultimately interpreting these developments through the authoritative lens of the Bible (*Sola Scriptura*). By examining phenomena such as the shifting religious landscape, ideological and moral upheavals, geopolitical conflicts, economic developments, technological ambitions, and environmental challenges, we seek to discern how a biblical worldview can critically engage and explain these trends. The goal is an integrated perspective demonstrating exceptional depth of analysis – one that is globally informed with case examples, yet rooted in transcendent scriptural principles as the final authority on truth and ethics.

Across six domains examined in this study, convergent evidence between reputable secondary datasets and a Sola Scriptura hermeneutic yields a coherent empirical picture of the first quarter of the twenty-first century. First, Christianity's demographic gravity has continued shifting decisively toward the Global South even as the West has secularized. Trends reported by the Pew Research Center show a sustained reduction in Christian affiliation in the United States between 2007 and 2021, alongside the rise of the "nones," while complementary missiological projections and region-specific analyses indicate robust Christian growth in sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia (Pew Research Center, 2022; Ilesanmi, 2023). This constitutes the lived context in which the Great Commission advances globally even as post-Christian patterns consolidate in historic Western strongholds, a tension theologically consistent with Matthew 28:19 and 2 Timothy 4:3–4.

Second, moral and legal norms surrounding sexuality and the family underwent rapid liberalization across numerous jurisdictions between 2000 and 2025, reflected in growing public approval for same-sex marriage in the United States and expanded legal access to abortion across many nations, notwithstanding important counter-movements such as Poland's restrictions and the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 Dobbs decision that reversed Roe v. Wade (Gallup, 2023; Sedgh, Mason, & Singh, 2022). These shifts mirror a broader ethical pivot toward expressive individualism that stands in principled tension with biblical teaching on creation order and the sanctity of life Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4–6; Psalm 139:13; Proverbs 6:16–17.

Third, religion remained a salient force in conflict and identity politics. The period saw intensified persecution of Christians in multiple regions, with 2025 reporting high levels of violence and pressure in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, and continued authoritarian constraints in places such as North Korea and China (Iacomini, 2025). This empirical reality comports with biblical expectation that faithful witness will meet opposition Matthew 24:9 and with the apostolic diagnosis of deeper spiritual conflict beneath geopolitics Ephesians 6:12.

Fourth, globalization delivered a historically significant reduction in extreme poverty from the 1990s through the mid-2010s, followed by pandemic-related setbacks and persistent within-country inequality. Large-scale syntheses document the long arc of poverty

decline and the concentration of recent reversals among vulnerable populations, while wealth has increasingly concentrated among top deciles (Hasell et al., 2022; Hoffman, 2025). Biblically, the gains demand gratitude and continued neighbor-love Mark 12:31, while skewed distribution and exploitation call forth prophetic critique Amos 8:4; James 5:1–4.

Fifth, rapid advances in artificial intelligence and biotechnologies created novel capacities alongside serious ethical risks. The arrival of powerful generative models by 2023–2024 sharpened questions of human agency, dignity, and stewardship (Engler, 2023). A biblical anthropology affirms the uniqueness of the imago Dei Genesis 1:27, commends healing uses of technology, and warns against transhumanist hubris that reprises humanity's oldest temptation Genesis 3:5.

Sixth, environmental indicators pointed to continued warming and ecological stress, with the 2010s and early 2020s registering among the warmest years in instrumental records, alongside extreme events, glacier loss, and biodiversity pressures (National Centers for Environmental Information, 2022). Stewardship consistent with Scripture frames creation care as a matter of obedience and love for neighbor Genesis 2:15; Psalm 24:1; Romans 8:22.

Taken together, the data depict a world in which secularization and Christian vitality advance along different geographic vectors; technoscientific power outpaces moral formation; markets lift millions even as inequality corrodes trust; and the environment signals limits that demand wiser dominion. These results align with the theological scaffolding developed throughout the manuscript and prepare the reader for the detailed analyses that follow.

1.2. Problem statement: Between 2000 and 2025, global society underwent rapid and interacting transformations in religion, morality, geopolitics, economics, technology, and environmental stewardship. While there are many domain-specific accounts, the literature lacks an integrative, empirically grounded, and theologically rigorous synthesis that evaluates these trends through a Sola Scriptura lens. The absence of such a synthesis obscures how concurrent shifts cohere or conflict, and it deprives scholars, church leaders, and policymakers of a unified framework for discerning truth, guiding conscience, and informing action. This paper addresses that gap by triangulating reputable secondary data with biblically grounded analysis to produce a coherent account of the period that is descriptively accurate and normatively clear.

1.3. Research objectives: This study pursues four objectives. First, to assemble a transparent secondary-data synthesis of salient global trends from 2000 to 2025 across religion and culture, politics and conflict, economics and poverty, science and technology, and environmental stewardship. Second, to evaluate the ethical and anthropological assumptions implicit in these trends against the authority of Scripture, holding that "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). Third, to develop an integrative interpretive framework that accounts for both the expansion of Christian vitality in the Global South and the secularization of the West in ways consistent with Matthew 28:19 and 2 Timothy 4:3–4. Fourth, to derive biblically faithful implications for discipleship, intellectual life, institutional leadership, and public witness in an age marked by moral confusion and technological power. These objectives map onto three thematic clusters elaborated in Section 1.4: empirical trends, theological alignment, and practical implications.

1.4. Research questions: To focus the inquiry, we group the questions into three thematic clusters. **Empirical trends:** How did the most consequential global trends between 2000 and 2025 evolve,

and what reliable secondary evidence best characterizes their direction and magnitude? **Theological alignment:** In what ways do these developments align with or depart from the biblical narrative of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation, and how does a biblical worldview explain the concurrent expansion of Christianity in the Global South and the consolidation of secularization in the West? **Practical implications:** What theological and ethical principles should govern Christian engagement with emergent technologies, economic systems, and environmental responsibilities in light of the evidence, and what integrated framework best supports faithful, wise, and public-minded Christian practice in the next quarter-century?

1.5. Novelty and contribution: This paper advances the field by integrating transparent secondary data across six domains into a single, biblical-worldview synthesis that is both descriptive and normative. Methodologically, it pairs a structured evidence matrix with canonical, Christ-centered exegesis, treating Scripture as determinative for ethics and anthropology while remaining accountable to publicly verifiable data. Conceptually, it proposes an interpretive framework that explains the Global South's Christian expansion alongside Western secularization and articulates guidance for technology, economics, and creation care. This combination of evidential breadth, hermeneutical clarity, and prescriptive specificity differentiates the study from existing domain-specific surveys and theological reflections on modernity (John 17:17; Matthew 28:19; 2 Timothy 4:3–4).

1.6. **Positioning within the literature:** Demographic syntheses such as Philip Jenkins's *The Next Christendom* and the third edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* establish the Southward shift and global dispersion of Christianity; this study incorporates those empirical contours while situating them within an integrated biblical evaluation of morality, politics, economics, science, and creation care. Cultural-theological analyses such as Carl R. Trueman's (2020) "*The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self"* and James Davison Hunter's (2010) "*To Change the World"* diagnose the ideological and institutional logics of late modernity; here we test and extend those diagnoses against cross-domain secondary data and a Sola Scriptura ethic. On technology, John Wyatt (2000) and Stephen N. Williams's (2019) edited volume *"The Robot Will See You Now"* gathers Christian perspectives on AI; our framework draws on such insights but moves further by binding technology ethics explicitly to the *imago Dei* and the creational telos articulated in Scripture

2. Methodology

2.1 Design and stance: This study employs an integrative review and secondary-data synthesis to draw together disparate but high-quality evidence on global sociocultural, geopolitical, economic, technological, and environmental trends between 2000 and 2025, interpreted within a Sola Scriptura framework. An integrative approach is appropriate where phenomena are complex, multi-sectoral, and theory-bearing; it enables the inclusion of empirical studies, credible datasets, and conceptual works, while enforcing methodological transparency and critical appraisal (Snyder, 2019; Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

2.2 Sources and coverage: Coverage spans 2000–2025 with selective anchoring to longer historical baselines where needed for trend integrity. Evidence domains include: (a) religion and culture (e.g., Pew Research Center, major missiological syntheses); (b) economics and poverty (e.g., Our World in Data compendia sourced from World Bank and allied institutions); (c) conflict and persecution (e.g., Open Doors and triangulated reportage); (d) technology and bioethics (e.g., peer-reviewed analyses); and (e) climate and environment (e.g., NOAA/NCEI and allied assessments). Scripture is

treated as authoritative for theology and ethics, and therefore functions not as a dataset but as the normative lens through which empirical patterns are weighed.

2.3 Identification, selection, and appraisal: Identification proceeded through targeted, domain-specific searches of reputable portals and journals, complemented by backward and forward citation tracing. Inclusion required that sources be recent within the time-window, methodologically explicit or data-transparent, and relevant to at least one research question. Exclusion applied to highly opinionated sources lacking methodological clarity or replicable data and to non-transparent aggregators. Conceptual and theological contributions were appraised for internal coherence, exegetical fidelity, and engagement with relevant scholarship. Datasets were cross-checked where feasible to establish consistency over time.

2.4 Data extraction and synthesis: For each domain, key variables and indicators were extracted into a structured matrix: measure, coverage period, geographical scope, and principal direction of change. Narrative synthesis then integrated converging patterns across domains, followed by theological analysis that tested ethical coherence and explanatory adequacy against Scripture. This two-step synthesis ensured that theological claims are not free-floating but are rooted in empirically recognizable realities.

2.5 Theological method: Biblical texts were read canonically and contextually, prioritizing authorial intent and the unity of Scripture, with the New Testament interpreting the Old and Christ as hermeneutical center (Luke 24:27). Ethical conclusions draw on creation order, fall, redemption, and consummation as the narrative arc that frames contemporary trends. Where modern claims conflict with Scripture, the latter is determinative (John 17:17).

2.6 Limitations: As a secondary synthesis, the study is bounded by the quality, timeliness, and regional coverage of existing datasets. Some high-salience indicators changed rapidly during 2020–2025, creating moving targets that require periodic updating. The decision to privilege authoritative, transparent sources improves reliability while inevitably excluding some grey literature that may contain useful but unverified signals.

3. Synthesis of the Findings

3.1. Shifting Religious Landscapes in a Globalized World

One of the most dramatic global trends since 2000 has been the shift in the religious landscape – Christianity's "center of gravity" is moving south and east. In 1900, Christianity was dominated by the West, but by the 21st century **Christianity's growth in the Global South (Africa, Asia, Latin America) far outpaces its decline in the traditional strongholds of Europe and North America** (Ilesanmi, 2023). For example, sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia have seen an explosion in Christian affiliation, whereas many Western countries face aging congregations and rising secularism. Statistical projections illustrate this inversion: by 2050, Europe may lose its historic prominence in Christendom – *possibly only one Western nation (the United States) will remain among the world's top ten countries by Christian population* (Ilesanmi, 2023). In contrast, countries like Nigeria, China, and India are expected to rank among the largest Christian populations. This fulfills what missiologist Philip Jenkins termed a "**new Christendom**" led by the global South (Wikipedia contributors, 2025). Indeed, over the past century Europe went from 95% Christian in 1900 to around 76% in 2020 (Zurlo, 2020), and that percentage includes many nominal adherents. Meanwhile, African and Asian churches are burgeoning – **Africans, Asians and Latin Americans are now more typical representatives of global Christianity than Europeans or North**

Americans (Ilesanmi, 2023). Vibrant evangelical and *Pentecostal movements* (often marked by energetic worship and claims of spiritual gifts) are particularly driving growth; Pentecostal Christianity is cited as *the fastest-growing religious movement worldwide*, largely due to conversions in the Global South (Wikipedia contributors, 2025).

Conversely, the Western world has experienced a well-documented **decline of Christian affiliation** and rise of secularization in recent decades. The United States offers a striking case: as recently as the early 1990s, roughly 90% of U.S. adults identified as Christian, but *today only about two-thirds do* (PRC, 2022). Over a few decades, tens of millions of Americans left churches – many becoming religious "nones" (atheist, agnostic, or no particular religion). From 2007 to 2021 alone, the U.S. Christian share fell from 78% to 63%, while the unaffiliated share nearly doubled from 16% to 29%(PRC, 2022). Similar secularizing trends appear in Western Europe, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where church attendance and religious identity have declined markedly since the 20th century (Wikipedia contributors, 2025).. Sociologists attribute this to multiple factors: increased material security and scientific progress reducing reliance on faith, cultural shifts toward individualism, scandals that eroded trust in religious institutions, and younger generations not inheriting their parents' beliefs (PRC, 2022). Some scholars theorize that as societies grow wealthier and more secure ("existential security"), religion's role in providing comfort amid hardship diminishes(PRC, 2022). Additionally, in the U.S. context, the entanglement of Christianity with conservative politics may have alienated some liberals from organized religion (PRC, 2022). The net result is a **rapid rise of the religiously unaffiliated** across much of the developed world. What is especially notable is a generational snowball effect: each successive cohort since the 1970s is less religious than the previous, and once a critical mass left faith, even older adults began shedding religious identity in greater numbers (a tipping point of secularization) (PRC, 2022). This great thinning of Western Christendom has led to a post-Christian cultural milieu – *yet the overall global picture of faith is far from simply one of decline.*

In fact, globally **the world is more religious in 2025 than it was in 2000 by absolute numbers**, even accounting for Western secularization. Both Christianity and Islam have continued to grow faster than the general population, fueled by demographic expansion and conversions in the Global South (Long, 2023). Islam in particular has been expanding at an estimated ~1.9% annual growth rate, outpacing Christianity's ~1.3% per year, thus gradually increasing the Muslim proportion of the world population (Long, 2023). **By 2023 Islam was indeed the fastest-growing major religion in percentage terms**, owing largely to higher birth rates in Muslim-majority countries. However, one should not mistake growth rate for total size. *Christianity remains the world's largest faith and is projected to stay so for the foreseeable future.* Even by mid-century, researchers expect **Christians to outnumber Muslims by roughly 3.4 billion to 2.6 billion** (estimates for 2050) (Long, 2023). Moreover, Christianity's growth is more geographically dispersed – with significant gains in sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia (e.g. underground churches in China), and parts of Latin America balancing out losses in Europe. In many individual countries, Christianity is actually growing faster than Islam; the overall global Islamic growth advantage is mainly due to a concentration of Muslims in high-fertility regions (Long, 2023). Notably, **China** has seen Christianity spread rapidly (often unofficially) – some analysts suggest that by 2030 China could have one of the largest Christian populations, which if realized might sustain Christianity's global lead (Wikipedia contributors, 2025). Thus, rather than a secular age, the early 21st century is a period of religious realignment: faith is **shifting location and form**.

From a **biblical worldview**, these developments are significant for several reasons. The decline of Christian adherence in historically Christian lands is sobering – it calls to mind scriptural warnings about apostasy and *"people turning away from the truth"* (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4). Indeed, many Western societies have increasingly *"done what is right in their own eyes,"* reminiscent of the era of the Judges, as they abandon biblical standards. On the other hand, the explosive growth of Christianity in unlikely places (African villages, Chinese cities, Iranian underground house churches, etc.) testifies to the continuing fulfillment of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19) – *the gospel is being preached to all nations*. The fact that **the majority of world Christians are now non-Western and often non-white** also highlights the trans-cultural nature of the gospel: *"There is neither Jew nor Greek… for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:28). In light of Sola Scriptura, Christians interpret the changing demographics as part of God's providential plan – *a reminder that the true Church is not tied to any single empire or ethnicity, but is a global body under Christ*. Furthermore, the resilience of religion worldwide challenges the secular assumption that modernization inevitably extinguishes faith. Instead, as this paper will explore, the persistence (and resurgence) of religious commitment suggests a fundamental human need for spiritual meaning that secular ideologies have not satisfied. The Bible speaks to this hunger: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). As material comfort alone proved inadequate for the soul, many in the Global North have turned to new spiritualities or ethical philosophies (or tragically, to nihilism), while in the Global South masses are turning to Christianity, Islam, and other faiths for answers. In summary, the 2000–2025 period demonstrates both a *Romans 1* scenario of societies "suppressing truth" and the *Acts 2* dynamic of the Spirit moving in powerful ways across new frontiers. This sets the stage for deeper analysis of how worldview shifts are playing out in culture and politics.

Synthesis: The Southward shift of Christian vitality amid Western secularization coheres with Scripture's expectation that the gospel advances even as some *"turn away from the truth"* (2 Tim 4:3–4) and with the Great Commission's outward movement to "all nations" (Mt 28:19). In the Global North, institutional decline and rising non-affiliation mirror Romans' account of suppressed truth and misplaced worship (Rom 1:18–25), while in the Global South, conversion growth and local mission reflect the Spirit's ongoing work (Acts 1:8). Comparative note: The United States and much of Western Europe continue long-run declines in affiliation, whereas sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia register sustained gains that keep global Christian numbers growing in absolute terms, a realignment consistent with major demographic syntheses. These patterns set up the moral, political, and technological tensions explored in the next sections, and they require a framework grounded in creation, fall, redemption, and consummation

3.2. Ideological and Moral Transformations (2000–2025)

Alongside religious realignments, the early 21st century has witnessed profound **ideological and moral transformations** on a global scale. Long-standing social norms have been upended in many countries, reflecting the rise of secular humanist values and what some philosophers call a "postmodern" view of truth and morality. In the West especially, **moral relativism and individual autonomy** have increasingly replaced the biblical-Christian moral framework that once undergirded public life. This is vividly seen in changing attitudes and laws regarding family, sexuality, and the sanctity of life from 2000 to 2025.

One of the most emblematic changes has been the rapid global acceptance of **same-sex marriage and LGBTQ+ rights**. At the dawn of the 21st century, no country allowed same-sex couples to marry; by 2025, *marriage for gay and lesbian couples is legally*

recognized in 38 countries representing about 1.5 billion people (20% of the world's population)(Wikipedia contributors, 2025). In the span of a generation, many societies moved from treating homosexuality as taboo to celebrating it openly. Public opinion shifted correspondingly: for example, only 27% of Americans believed same-sex marriage should be valid in 1996, whereas **68% of Americans supported it by 2025** (Gallup, 2023). Similar liberalizing trends in attitudes have been recorded across Europe, Latin America, and parts of Asia, especially among younger generations. This normative revolution stems from a broader ideological emphasis on *individual rights, equality, and freedom of self-expression* that characterizes late-modern secular cultures. Where traditional religious ethics (Christian, Islamic, etc.) taught that sexual relations should be confined to heterosexual marriage, the new ethos holds that personal choice and love are the highest goods, effectively relativizing moral judgments. As a result, what the Bible and virtually all societies for millennia considered objectively **immoral (e.g. homosexual acts)** has been reframed as not only morally permissible but as an *inviolable human right*. This is a clear instance where contemporary culture diverges sharply from biblical teaching. According to Scripture, God's design for marriage is the lifelong union of a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4–6); hence, from a Sola Scriptura standpoint, no civil redefinition can alter the moral truth that homosexual behavior is outside God's created order (Romans 1:26–27). Yet our analysis must also note the complexity: the push for LGBTQ+ acceptance often appeals to compassion and justice (seeking to protect people from discrimination). The *biblical worldview agrees with affirming each person's dignity (Genesis 1:27) and loving one's neighbor*, but it does not concede that love requires affirming all desires. **This tension between biblical absolutism and secular relativism** on moral issues like sexuality has become a defining cultural fault line of the 21st century.

Another contentious arena is the **sanctity of human life, particularly concerning abortion**. The period 2000–2025 saw significant shifts in abortion laws around the world, generally toward more permissive policies. According to the Guttmacher Institute, *52 countries reformed their abortion laws between 2000 and 2022, and all but two of these nations expanded legal access to abortion* (e.g. widening the grounds or extending gestational limits) (Sedgh et al., 2022). Nations such as **Ireland** (traditionally Catholic) legalized abortion on request in 2019, overturning decades of strict prohibition (Sedgh et al., 2022). Similarly, countries across Latin America (e.g. Argentina, Colombia, Mexico), once bastions of pro-life laws, decriminalized or loosened restrictions on abortion in the 2010s and early 2020s. These changes often arose from campaigns framed in terms of women's rights, health, and personal autonomy – hallmarks of a humanist ethical framework that prioritizes individual choice. However, there have been *notable exceptions* moving in the opposite direction: **Poland** tightened its abortion law in 2020 (allowing it only in very limited cases), **Nicaragua** outlawed virtually all abortions in the 2000s, and in the United States the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision (1973) guaranteeing abortion rights was overturned in 2022 by the Supreme Court, enabling many U.S. states to re-impose restrictions (Sedgh et al., 2022). These exceptions underscore that moral views remain deeply divided. Indeed, after the U.S. reversal of *Roe*, America became something of a *global outlier*, bucking the liberalizing trend and demonstrating an ongoing strong pro-life movement grounded largely in religious convictions (Sedgh et al., 2022). Overall, though, the dominant global trajectory has been towards seeing abortion as part of basic healthcare and personal freedom – a view fundamentally at odds with the biblical perspective that unborn life is sacred (*"You knit me together in my mother's womb"* – Psalm 139:13). The Bible consistently affirms the value of human life at all stages, condemns the shedding of innocent blood (Proverbs 6:16–17), and calls believers to defend the vulnerable. From a biblical lens, the widespread legal acceptance of abortion

(over **73 million abortions per year** according to the WHO) represents a grievous moral regression – what Pope John Paul II termed a *"culture of death."* A Christian analysis would attribute this trend to the rise of *secular individualism*, where personal convenience and choice are idolized over communal and divine responsibilities. It also reflects what Romans 1 describes as society "suppressing the truth" and God "giving them over" to their own futile thinking. Yet amidst this, the resilience of pro-life voices and some legal victories (like the U.S. Dobbs decision) show a continuing contest between worldviews. This contest is essentially *moral absolutism versus moral relativism*: **biblical ethics upholding absolute truths (the inherent worth of each life made in God's image) versus a relativistic ethic where the value of life can be contingent on preference or circumstance**.

Across many other issues – **euthanasia, gender identity, bioethics** – similar patterns are evident. Several countries (Canada, parts of Europe) legalized or expanded euthanasia/assisted suicide in the 2010s, reflecting a view that personal autonomy extends to choosing the timing of one's death. Concurrently, an aggressive gender ideology has taken hold in some cultures, asserting that gender is a subjective identity rather than a biological reality, leading to policies that allow gender reassignment treatments even for minors. These ideas would have been fringe or unthinkable in 2000; by 2025 they are institutionalized in various forms. A philosophically **postmodern ethos** – which denies fixed truth and maintains that reality (including morals and even physical sex) is socially constructed – undergirds much of this. The Bible, by contrast, presents a **creation truth**: "Male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27) and the principle that moral laws are grounded in God's unchanging character (e.g. Hebrews 13:8). Christian philosophers and theologians have critiqued the modern West's rejection of **absolute truth** as a root cause of its moral confusion. When every person "does what is right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25), the result is not true freedom but often social chaos and inner despair. Notably, even some secular observers now speak of a "meaning crisis" or "moral vacuum" in highly secularized societies. Rising rates of depression, suicide, and substance abuse in countries that are materially successful but spiritually empty seem to confirm G.K. Chesterton's quip: *"When men choose not to believe in God, they do not thereafter believe in nothing, they then become capable of believing in anything."* As traditional frameworks are cast off, **new ideologies or quasi-religions** rush in to fill the void – be it political ideologies, consumerism, or activist causes that give a sense of purpose. This dynamic was insightfully noted by Ziya Meral, who argued that modern people still desperately seek an overarching narrative to make sense of life; if they abandon religion, they end up imbuing other value systems with "religious" significance to meet the need for meaning (Cohen, 2020). For example, environmentalism or social justice can take on a near-sacred character for some, effectively functioning as substitute religions that offer moral structure and community. The Bible recognizes this human tendency: that we are worshippers by nature (Romans 1:20-25). If true worship of God is forsaken, **idolatry** in some form is inevitable – whether worship of self, state, money, or nature. In sum, the moral and ideological shifts of the early 21st century reveal a clash of worldviews: **the biblical worldview, which asserts transcendent truth and God-given moral order, versus various humanist or relativist worldviews that exalt autonomous reason or desire above divine authority**. As this section has outlined, issues from sexual ethics to life and death have been hotly contested along this divide. The next sections will explore how these worldview conflicts manifest in global politics and society, and how a biblical perspective critically assesses them.

Synthesis: The normative revolution of the early twenty-first century elevates choice as supreme while redefining truth and the body. Sola Scriptura answers with an integrated moral vision in

which created nature, covenantal marriage, and the protection of nascent life are not negotiable preferences but goods ordered to human flourishing under God (Gen 2:24; Rom 12:1–2). The divergence is sharper in the Global North than in many parts of the Global South, yet the underlying spiritual contest is common: a struggle between the worship of self and the worship of God (Rom 1:25).

3.3. Religion, Conflict, and Nationalism in the 21st Century

Far from fading into irrelevance, religion has remained a potent – and sometimes volatile – force in global affairs from 2000 to 2025. In fact, this era has seen what some call a **resurgence of religion in politics and nationalism**, often in reaction to the very secularization trends discussed above. The tragic September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S. heralded a new age in which religiously-fueled violence (in this case, militant Islamist extremism) became a central geopolitical challenge. The subsequent "War on Terror," conflicts in the Middle East, and the rise of jihadist groups like ISIS (Islamic State) underscored that **religious ideologies can drive global conflict** as powerfully as political or economic motives. At the same time, many societies experienced a surge of *religious nationalism* – a fusion of national identity with a dominant religious or civilizational identity – leading to internal and regional tensions.

A survey of examples is telling. In the Middle East, the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Syrian civil war, and other upheavals unleashed sectarian strife (Sunni vs. Shia, Muslim vs. Christian and Yazidi minorities) with religion at the core of communal identities. In South Asia, **India** saw the ascent of Hindu nationalism under the BJP government (since 2014), resulting in increased pressures on Muslims and Christians as "outsiders" in a Hindu Rashtra (nation). **Turkey** and **Russia** present cases of leaders invoking religion for nationalist legitimation – President Erdoğan emphasizing Turkey's Ottoman-Islamic heritage, and President Putin aligning with the Russian Orthodox Church and portraying Russia as the defender of Christian values against Western secular liberalism. In Europe and North America, a different but related phenomenon occurred: elements of the far-right began invoking *Christian heritage* in populist nationalist movements (for instance, parties in Europe opposing immigration from Muslim countries in the name of protecting "Christian Europe," or the rhetoric of some groups in the United States touting "Christian nationalism"). Thus, across very different cultural contexts, the period saw a **convergence of religion and identity politics**. As one analyst describes, we are witnessing *"the re-emergence of white far-right extremism with Christian references in Europe and North America [and] multiple forms of Islamism as well as religious nationalism across the world from Turkey to India, Russia, Hungary, and the United States"*(Cohen, 2020). This trend is both old and new: old in that religion and collective identity have long been intertwined, new in the forms it takes in a globalized, media-saturated world.

Comparative note: Persecution intensity differs by region: sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia account for the largest share of violent incidents and martyrdoms in 2024–2025, while authoritarian control in North Korea and China concentrates on surveillance and coercive pressure. The Global North sees sporadic harassment, vandalism, and legal pressures rather than systemic violence, though polarization has raised the salience of "Christian heritage" in identity politics.

What is driving this resurgence? A key concept is **anomie**, the social instability and alienation that arise from the breakdown of values or norms. Rapid changes – globalization, economic shocks, migration, the information revolution – have unsettled many communities, creating a sense of *loss of meaning and control*. In

such times, people often gravitate to strong identity markers and narratives that promise to restore order and purpose (Cohen, 2020). Religion, with its deep story about the world and clear moral structure, provides exactly that kind of anchoring narrative. The Bible itself observes that *"when there is no vision, the people perish"* (Proverbs 29:18); lacking a shared vision, societies fragment. In the early 21st century, many felt the dominant secular, globalist vision was failing to give them a place and dignity. The response, consciously or not, was a **turn to more primal loyalties – God, tribe, and nation** – as bulwarks against chaos. In academic terms, we see a **desecularization**: after a mid-20th-century high tide of secular ideologies, religion roared back to the forefront of world affairs. This challenges the once-prevailing theory that modernization would inevitably privatize and diminish religion. Instead, modern conflicts and movements often carry a religious hue, even when their root causes are complex.

Unfortunately, the intermixing of religion with aggressive nationalism or extremism has had dire consequences for peace and human rights. In countries like **Nigeria**, religious identity overlaps with ethnic and regional divides, fueling a deadly conflict between Islamist militants (Boko Haram and Fulani extremists) and largely Christian communities in the Middle Belt – thousands of Christians have been killed in attacks on villages and churches. In **Myanmar**, the Buddhist majority's nationalism contributed to the persecution of Muslim Rohingyas and pressures on Christian minorities (Iacomini, 2025). The *Open Doors* World Watch List, which tracks persecution of Christians, paints a stark picture: *over 380 million Christians worldwide live under high levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith* as of 2025 (Iacomini, 2025). This means **1 in 7 Christians globally** faces pressure, harassment or violence – ranging from authoritarian regimes like North Korea and China attempting to suppress Christianity, to radical Islamic militants in countries like Somalia or Afghanistan who kill converts, to Hindu and Buddhist nationalist mobs attacking churches in South Asia (Iacomini, 2025). In the year 2024 alone, nearly **5,000 Christians were confirmed killed for faith-related reasons**, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa (with Nigeria accounting for the majority of those martyrs) (Iacomini, 2025). Other religious minorities have likewise suffered: Uyghur Muslims in China have been interned in camps; Jews in Europe have seen a resurgence of antisemitic attacks; Muslims in India and Christians in Pakistan have been targets of mob violence and blasphemy accusations. These facts underscore that the fusion of religion with political grievance or ethnic chauvinism can yield a toxic brew.

From a **biblical perspective**, how do we interpret and respond to this religious tumult? Firstly, Scripture is not surprised by the persistence of religious conflict. Jesus foretold that *"nation will rise against nation"* and believers would be persecuted for His name (Matthew 24:7-9). The Bible also reveals a spiritual dimension behind earthly conflicts: *"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against… spiritual forces of evil"* (Ephesians 6:12). We can thus understand the rise of violent ideologies (whether ISIS's jihadism or racist extremism cloaked in Christian language) as manifestations of humanity's fallen nature and the devil's work to steal, kill, and destroy. At the same time, believers are called to a higher loyalty that transcends earthly tribes. **Sola Scriptura affirms that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20)** and that *"there is no partiality with God"* – He judges nations and defends the oppressed (Acts 10:34-35). Therefore, while love of country and culture can be good, the Bible condemns idolatrous nationalism that elevates one's nation or ethnicity above justice and mercy. The Hebrew prophets often rebuked ancient Israel for nationalistic pride and injustice, warning that righteousness is the only exaltation of a nation (Proverbs 14:34). Applying this, a biblical analysis would critique religious nationalism when it becomes *"toxic"*: e.g., when Christians wrap the cross in the flag and forget the universality of the gospel, or

when any group uses God's name to justify hatred. The gospel relativizes every human identity – **no nation or race can claim divine favoritism**, except insofar as it aligns with God's moral law.

Moreover, the Bible commands Christians to *"seek the peace of the city"* (Jeremiah 29:7) and to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). In the face of religious conflicts, a scriptural approach urges reconciliation, justice, and suffering love, rather than vengeance or domination. For instance, where Christians are persecuted, the New Testament calls them to endure and witness (1 Peter 4:12-16), and where Christians hold power, it calls them to protect the weak and promote peace (Romans 12:18, 13:4). A hopeful sign is that in some conflict zones, *people of faith have also been agents of peace*: local churches in Nigeria mediating between communities, interfaith dialogues in the Middle East, or the forgiveness shown by victims of terror that can break cycles of retribution. These reflect Christ's teachings in action. On a theological level, the ongoing religious strife also reminds Christians that ultimate peace will only be achieved under the reign of Christ, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7). Until then, we navigate a world of *"wars and rumors of wars"*.

In summary, the period 2000–2025 refuted any notion that religion would quietly disappear from public life. Instead, religion has been at the heart of identity and conflict – sometimes as a source of division and violence, other times as a source of resilience and hope for millions. A biblical worldview neither idealizes nor dismisses this fact, but rather seeks to understand the spiritual realities at play and to respond with the truth and love of the gospel. It insists that *true Christianity cannot be co-opted as just another tribal ideology*; rather, the Church's mission is to **rise above nationalism and racism, proclaiming repentance and reconciliation in Christ to all peoples**. And for other religions, the Christian perspective holds that the ultimate solution to conflict is not secularism or domination, but the transformative power of Christ's kingdom, in which people "from every tribe and language" are reconciled to God and one another (Revelation 7:9). This vision stands in stark contrast to the fragmentation we see – and it is the Church's task to model that heavenly community here and now, as an antidote to the polarization and violence of our times.

Synthesis: Religious resurgence in politics is neither accidental nor merely sociological; it exposes humanity's search for meaning amid anomie. Scripture anticipates opposition to faithful witness (Mt 24:9) and unmasks the powers at work behind conflict (Eph 6:12). The Church's vocation is neither tribal capture nor retreat but cruciform peacemaking and justice that honor every image-bearer (Mic 6:8; Mt 5:9).

3.4. Globalization, Poverty, and Economic Justice

The early 21st century has also been defined by intensifying **globalization** – the increasing interconnectedness of economies, cultures, and governance. This has had profound economic and social effects: some remarkably positive, others deeply problematic. On one hand, globalization and technological progress helped lift unprecedented numbers of people out of extreme poverty between 2000 and 2015. On the other hand, the same forces contributed to rising inequality, exploitation, and a sense of injustice that has fueled populist backlashes. A comprehensive worldview analysis must therefore grapple with questions of **economic justice, wealth and poverty**, evaluating these trends in light of biblical ethics.

By the numbers, the reduction in extreme poverty since 2000 has been a tremendous achievement. The World Bank and UN data show a steep decline in the global poverty rate over the past few decades. In 1990, around 37% of humanity lived in extreme poverty (often defined as under about $2–$3 a day); by 2019 that share had fallen below 10% (Hasell et al., 2022). In absolute terms, *over 1.5 billion people escaped extreme poverty between 1990 and*

2025, thanks to economic growth in Asia and parts of Africa (Hasell et al., 2022). The turn of the millennium saw China, India, and other developing nations integrate into the world economy, industrialize, and enjoy high growth rates that translated into higher incomes for many of their poorest citizens. For example, China's GDP per capita grew nearly tenfold from 2000 to 2020, lifting hundreds of millions out of dire poverty. As a result, **the world reached a milestone**: by the mid-2010s, for the first time in history, less than 10% of people were in extreme poverty. Though the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused a setback – global poverty rose slightly that year by an estimated 50 million people due to economic disruptions (Hasell et al., 2022) – the overall trend remains one of dramatic improvement compared to a generation ago. As of 2025, roughly *800 million people (about 1 in 10 worldwide) still live in extreme poverty* (Hasell et al., 2022), which is 800 million too many, but vastly fewer (both proportionally and in absolute count) than 30 years prior. This decline in material poverty, accompanied by improvements in access to education, healthcare, and technology in many developing regions, is often hailed as one of globalization's great successes. It highlights the potential for human innovation and cooperation to better material conditions on a global scale.

Comparative note: East and South Asia achieved the steepest declines in extreme poverty since 2000, while progress in sub-Saharan Africa has lagged and, in some countries, reversed during the pandemic and its aftermath. Updated World Bank nowcasts and Our World in Data syntheses confirm that extreme poverty's global epicenter has shifted toward sub-Saharan Africa even as overall global rates remain far below 1990 levels.

From a **biblical viewpoint**, such poverty alleviation is to be celebrated as a matter of justice and compassion. Scripture consistently calls God's people to care for the poor and work for the relief of suffering (Proverbs 19:17, Isaiah 58:6-7). The fact that millions have gained better nutrition, clean water, literacy, and longer life expectancy in recent years aligns with the biblical mandate to "**love your neighbor as yourself**" (Mark 12:31) – in global terms, seeing distant strangers as neighbors we have a duty to assist. Christians can acknowledge the role of global trade, market reforms, and technology in this progress, while also asserting that it is God who ultimately "lifts the needy from the ash heap" (1 Samuel 2:8) – often through the means of human enterprise and generosity. Indeed, many Christian organizations have been on the frontlines of development and humanitarian efforts during this period, from disaster relief to microfinance to health missions, embodying faith-motivated action against poverty. The early 21st century thus offers a hopeful testimony that extreme poverty is not an inescapable curse; it can be rolled back when there is concerted effort, wise stewardship, and (one might add) the blessing of God's common grace in human endeavors.

Yet, the story is not uniformly positive. **Globalization's gains have been very unevenly distributed, leading to stark economic inequalities that raise ethical concerns.** While average incomes rose, the gap between the ultra-rich and the rest grew wider in many countries. For example, in the United States – a microcosm of a broader trend – *the richest 10% of households controlled about 68% of the nation's wealth in 2000, but over 71% by 2023* (Hoffman, P. (2025). The top 1% saw their share of wealth rise even more sharply. This pattern is echoed globally: booming stock markets, real estate, and corporate profits greatly enriched those with capital, even as wages for ordinary workers stagnated in many developed nations. In fast-growing economies like **China**, inequality soared: *the top 1% of Chinese hold about 30% of the country's wealth today, up from just 10% in 2000* (Hoffman, 2025). Worldwide, the era produced many billionaires whose net worth exceeds the GDP of entire nations, highlighting a concentration of economic power that can translate into outsized political influence. At the same time,

globalization led to dislocations: manufacturing jobs moved from high-wage to low-wage countries, contributing to unemployment and social strain in parts of the developed world. The 2008 global financial crisis – triggered by excessive greed and unethical behavior in financial markets – further revealed the fragility and injustice in the economic system, as millions lost homes and jobs while banks were bailed out. All these factors fed a sense of grievance among middle and working classes in various countries, fueling populist movements and distrust of elites. In summary, **the rich got significantly richer, while the poor did get somewhat less poor, but often still struggled – and the relative gulf widened**, especially within nations.

The Bible offers strong commentary on such dynamics. **Scripture condemns gross inequality and the oppression of the poor by the rich.** The prophet Amos thundered against those who "trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end" (Amos 8:4), and James warns the wealthy: *"Come now, you rich, weep and howl... Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you"* (James 5:1,4). These verses eerily resonate with 21st-century scenes: corporations exploiting sweatshop labor, or CEOs earning hundreds of times the salary of their workers. A biblical worldview insists on the **inherent dignity of every person** (Genesis 1:27) and thus on fair treatment and care for the vulnerable – principles which stand against unbridled capitalism that prizes profit over people. While the Bible does not oppose wealth per se (righteous figures like Abraham or Job were wealthy), it repeatedly emphasizes stewardship and generosity: *"To whom much is given, much will be required"* (Luke 12:48). The early church modeled a radical economic sharing such that "there was not a needy person among them" (Acts 4:34). In contrast, today's world, despite its aggregate wealth, still sees **nearly 10% in extreme poverty, and about half the world living on under $6 per day** – highlighting unmet obligations of justice. The Christian ethical tradition would argue that wealthy individuals and nations have a moral duty to aid those in extreme need, a concept sometimes termed "preferential option for the poor."

Furthermore, the **idolatry of wealth** is a grave spiritual danger that Jesus warned about more than any other social issue. *"You cannot serve God and money"* (Matthew 6:24). The early 21st century's materialistic culture, driven by consumerism and the worship of market success, can be seen as a form of idolatry in biblical terms. The 2008 crisis, for instance, revealed a spirit of greed and false security in riches that the Bible would deem folly (Luke 12:15-21). Therefore, a biblical analysis does not merely lament inequality but calls for repentance from greed, a reorientation of priorities toward contentment and generosity (1 Timothy 6:6-10), and systemic changes to ensure economic fairness. This could include advocacy for ethical business practices, just wages (see James 5:4), measures against corruption, and prudent regulation of financial markets to protect the common good. In international relations, it might mean richer nations showing solidarity with poorer ones – not exploiting them through unfair trade or debt traps, but partnering to build capacity and resilience.

Encouragingly, some global initiatives have embodied these values: the Jubilee 2000 campaign for debt relief (inspired by the biblical Jubilee concept) succeeded in forgiving billions in debt of impoverished nations, and the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals/SDGs have rallied international cooperation to reduce hunger and improve health. Faith communities have often been at the forefront of such efforts. Yet much work remains to achieve an economy that truly reflects the justice of God's Kingdom, where *"everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid"* (Micah 4:4). In conclusion, globalization between 2000 and 2025 delivered both **remarkable progress and sobering inequities**. The Bible offers a dual response:

gratitude for the reduction in suffering (with echoes of Proverbs 13:23, *"abundant food is in the fallow ground of the poor"* – given the opportunity, the poor can flourish) and prophetic critique against the excesses of greed and inequality (recalling that *"righteousness and justice are the foundation of God's throne"* – Psalm 89:14). Balancing these, a Christian worldview advocates for an economy tempered by justice, compassion, and ethical restraint – seeking the *shalom* (peace/prosperity) of all, not just the privileged few.

Synthesis: The economic story of 2000–2025 requires both gratitude and prophecy. Where markets and innovation have relieved want, love of neighbor demands continued participation and generosity (Mk 12:31). Where inequality, exploitation, and fraud corrode common life, Scripture calls for repentance, just weights, and protection of laborers (Amos 8:4–6; Jas 5:1–4). This double posture frames the Christian contribution to economic policy and practice in the next quarter century.

3.6. Science, Technology, and the Quest to "Be Like God"

The period 2000–2025 has also been an era of breathtaking **scientific and technological advancement**, which has fundamentally altered how we live and even what it means to be human. Breakthroughs in fields such as information technology, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence (AI) have opened possibilities that once belonged to the realm of science fiction. Humanity can now edit genes with CRISPR, interact with intelligent machines, and contemplate fusing digital and biological identity. These advances bring tremendous benefits – medical cures, improved quality of life, expanded knowledge – but they also pose profound ethical and philosophical dilemmas. In many ways, society is grappling with questions like: *Just because we can do something, should we? What are the limits of being human?* From a biblical perspective, these developments must be weighed against the wisdom of Scripture regarding human nature, the purpose of technology, and the perennial temptation for humans to usurp the place of God.

One of the most visible leaps has been in **Artificial Intelligence**. By 2025, AI systems are deeply embedded in daily life – from algorithms that recommend what we watch and buy, to virtual assistants, to autonomous vehicles. Notably, the last few years saw the rise of *generative AI* and large language models (like OpenAI's GPT series) that can produce human-like text, images, and even voice. In 2023–2024, AI reached new heights: models like GPT-4 demonstrated ability to hold complex conversations, write code, and perform tasks that seemed to require human-level understanding (Engler, 2023). Tech companies race to develop ever more powerful AI, even as society struggles with implications like job displacement, privacy erosion, misinformation (deepfakes), and the specter of AI surpassing human intelligence. Some experts herald AI as the key to solving global problems, while others warn it could become a **Frankenstein's monster** if misaligned with human values. Indeed, by 2023 a chorus of voices (including prominent AI researchers) called for caution or a moratorium on developing AI beyond a certain point until safety and ethical frameworks catch up (Engler, 2023). The fact that AI can now write convincing essays or serve as a pseudo-companion raises questions of identity and meaning – e.g., if an AI "pastor" offers counsel or even preaches sermons, what does that mean for authentic spirituality? The Bible of course does not mention artificial intelligence, but it provides principles to guide us. At core, **Scripture affirms human uniqueness**: humans are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) with a soul, moral agency, and eternal value, unlike any machine. Thus, however advanced AI becomes, a Christian believes it can never fully replicate the imago Dei or the human spirit endowed by God. This has implications: for instance, using AI to replace genuine human relationships or responsibilities might be seen as violating the created order. The

Bible also extols wisdom and discernment; applying that, Christians urge that technology be developed responsibly, for good purposes, and under moral restraint – not *"everything is permissible"* (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Perhaps the most striking aspect of modern technology is how it has enabled a **transhumanist vision** – the idea of using science to radically enhance or even transform human beings beyond natural limits. Advocates of transhumanism foresee a future where aging is cured, minds are uploaded to computers for digital immortality, and humans merge with AI to become a new species. These aspirations are not mere fantasy; research is underway on brain-computer interfaces (like Elon Musk's Neuralink), longevity treatments, and gene editing to eliminate diseases. Some tech visionaries explicitly frame this in quasi-religious terms. They speak of achieving *omniscience, omnipotence, and immortality* through technology – essentially, humanity taking on attributes traditionally ascribed to God (Engler, 2023). As one analysis noted, certain philosophers even liken the coming "global brain" (a future collective AI-network-human amalgam) to a godlike consciousness encompassing everyone (Engler, 2023). In effect, **some hope that AI and biotechnology will allow humans to "become like God,"** transcending our creaturely limitations (Engler, 2023). This is a stunning echo of the oldest temptation in the Bible. In Genesis 3, the serpent enticed Eve with the prospect, *"you will be like God"* (Genesis 3:5), if she disobeyed God's command. From a biblical perspective, the transhumanist impulse is a modern re-play of the Tower of Babel – humanity uniting to storm heaven, so to speak, by its own ingenuity (Genesis 11:4-6). The **hubris** inherent in this should be apparent: the pursuit of godlike power without godly wisdom leads to disaster. The Babel story ended with God confusing languages and scattering people, reminding them of their finitude. Similarly, Christians would caution that attempts to fundamentally redesign human nature or attain immortality apart from God are bound to produce unintended consequences and moral chaos.

Indeed, the ethical questions abound. If we have the ability to edit genes, who decides which traits are "desirable"? Could it lead to new forms of eugenics or a gap between the "augmented" rich and unenhanced poor? If AI becomes superintelligent, how do we ensure it respects human dignity rather than treats us as expendable? Secular society is scrambling to address these issues with commissions, guidelines, and philosophical debates. A biblical lens brings additional clarity: it asserts **God's sovereignty** – that there is a Creator-creature distinction which must be respected. Humans are stewards of creation, permitted to invent and cultivate (Genesis 1:28), but not to mutilate or subvert God's design. For example, editing genes to cure disease may be viewed as an extension of healing (in line with Jesus' healing ministry), but enhancing traits to "improve" on God's image could be seen as overstepping rightful bounds. The concept of *playing God* is frequently invoked – and biblically, when humans have arrogated divine prerogatives (like determining life and death, or truth itself), it leads to corruption. Therefore, many Christian ethicists call for *humility in science*. As one Christian bioethicist put it, in navigating AI and biotech, **"Christians can lead with biblical wisdom and ethical engagement"**, recognizing God as Creator and ourselves as finite, accountable beings (Engler, 2023). This means championing the inherent dignity of every human (so, e.g., opposing discarding embryos in research, or AI systems that violate privacy or fairness), and challenging any narrative that salvation can come from technology. Ultimately, the Bible holds that *salvation and eternal life are gifts from God through Christ (Romans 6:23), not something humans can engineer*.

It is worth noting that technology has also enabled **great good** consistent with biblical values. Advances in medicine have

saved millions of lives (child mortality globally has plummeted since 2000), information tech has democratized knowledge and given a voice to the oppressed (e.g. social media helping expose injustice, coordinate relief efforts), and during the COVID-19 pandemic, digital tools allowed churches and communities to stay connected when physical gatherings were restricted. These reflect how tools are *morally ambivalent – it's the use that matters*. The same internet that spreads pornography and disinformation can spread the Gospel to closed countries. Thus, Christians generally embrace science as a gift from God (all truth is God's truth), while rejecting the ideological **scientism** that elevates human reason as the sole source of truth. The period saw some tension here too: a rise in new atheism (figures like Richard Dawkins) that claim science disproves God, met by robust Christian scholarship affirming harmony between faith and reason. In a way, the **cultural narrative oscillates between fearing technology as dystopian and idolizing it as savior**. A biblical view avoids both extremes, seeing technology as part of human *culture-making* under God's mandate, yet always needing ethical direction from divine revelation.

In conclusion, the technological strides from 2000 to 2025 confront humanity with its own identity. Will we acknowledge our creaturely status and the wisdom of our Creator, or will we attempt to seize God's throne via silicon and gene sequences? The world's pursuit of AI and transhuman enhancements in many ways embodies humanity's oldest impulses: to gain knowledge and power without submitting to God. The Bible provides a counternarrative: *true knowledge begins with the fear of the Lord* (Proverbs 9:10), and true life – even eternal life – is found not by escaping our humanity, but by being redeemed and renewed in Christ, the perfect Image of God (Colossians 1:15). Far from stifling science, this perspective properly orders it: science and tech become instruments of loving God and neighbor, rather than self-deification. As AI reaches impressive heights, Christians remind the world that **only God is all-knowing and all-good**, and our creations, no matter how advanced, reflect the fallibility of their makers. In the coming decades, maintaining this humble, ethical stance will be crucial to ensure that technology serves humanity rather than enslaves or destroys it. The tower of modern Babel need not end in confusion if we remember our place and seek God's guidance in our genius. The choice between pride and humility in our innovation may very well determine whether the next chapters of history are marked by blessing or curse.

Comparative note: Frontier AI development, compute capacity, and private investment remain concentrated in the United States and China, with Europe contributing fewer frontier-scale models; meanwhile, connectivity, affordability, and digital-skills gaps persist across the Global South, where only about two-fifths of Africa's population was online in 2024 and mobile internet remains far less affordable than in Europe. This asymmetry shapes both opportunity and vulnerability in AI deployment and governance across regions.

Synthesis: Technological ambition without theological wisdom reprises Babel's conceit (Gen 11:4–6). A biblical anthropology centers the imago Dei (Gen 1:27) and orders innovation to love of God and neighbor, welcoming healing uses while resisting transhumanist hubris and tools that degrade dignity. The policy horizon is uneven across regions, but the moral horizon is not: wisdom, humility, and stewardship must govern the design and deployment of powerful systems.

3.7. Environmental Stewardship and Climate Challenges

The years 2000–2025 have also been critical for the global environment. Issues of **climate change, environmental degradation, and conservation** have moved to the forefront of international concern. Scientific consensus indicates that human activities – especially the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, and

industrial agriculture – have contributed to a warming planet, biodiversity loss, and ecological instability on an unprecedented scale. The early 21st century has seen record-breaking temperatures, increasingly extreme weather events, and intensifying debates over how to balance economic development with environmental sustainability. In this context, an interesting dialogue has emerged between secular environmental ethics and religious (particularly Christian) perspectives on creation care. Historically, some critics accused the Judeo-Christian tradition of encouraging exploitation of nature (citing the "dominion" mandate in Genesis 1:28). However, a closer examination of the Bible reveals a strong foundation for **environmental stewardship** – one that can contribute meaningfully to solving today's ecological crises. This section analyzes recent environmental trends and responses through the lens of biblical teaching, holding Scripture as the authority on how we ought to relate to the natural world.

Comparative note: The decade 2015–2024 contains the warmest years on record, with 2024 the hottest yet in NOAA and WMO datasets, while fossil CO_2 emissions again reached record highs in 2024. Responsibility and vulnerability are distributed unevenly: higher historical and per-capita emitters are concentrated in the Global North, but climate damages and adaptation constraints fall disproportionately on lower-income countries, especially in the Global South.

First, consider the state of the climate. **Global climate change** is no longer a distant prediction but a lived reality. The past eight years (2015–2022) have been confirmed as the *eight warmest years on record globally*. Despite periodic cooling influences like La Niña, the overall trend is clear: Earth's average temperature has risen about 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, and is on track to rise further. The year 2022, for instance, was around 0.86°C warmer than the 20th-century average, ranking as the 6th hottest year since 1880 (NCEI, 2022). We have witnessed alarming signs of a changing climate: the rapid decline of Arctic sea ice and mountain glaciers, more frequent and intense heatwaves (e.g. the deadly European heatwaves of 2003 and 2019), catastrophic wildfires from Australia to California, and stronger cyclones and flooding events. Developing nations – which have contributed least to emissions – often suffer the worst impacts, such as prolonged droughts in sub-Saharan Africa and sea level rise threatening low-lying islands. In response, the international community negotiated accords like the **Paris Agreement (2015)**, aiming to limit warming to well below 2°C. Yet, progress has been faltering as emissions continued to rise through the 2010s, aside from a brief dip during COVID-19 lockdowns. By 2025, the world stands at a crossroads: either escalate action to transition to renewable energy and sustainable practices, or face increasingly uncontrollable climate disruptions by mid-century.

Concurrently, **environmental degradation** in forms beyond climate – deforestation, pollution, species extinction – has reached critical levels. The Amazon rainforest (often called the "lungs of the Earth") lost vast tracts to logging and agriculture in the 2000s, raising concerns of reaching an irreversible tipping point. Plastic pollution in the oceans has created huge garbage patches, harming marine life. Scientists warn we are in the midst of a sixth mass extinction, with species dying out at rates hundreds of times the natural background rate due to habitat loss, poaching, and climate shifts. These realities have spurred a growing environmental consciousness, especially among younger generations. Movements advocating for conservation, sustainable living, and climate justice (emphasizing fairness for those most affected) have gained momentum. Secular voices often frame this as an urgent moral issue: *we have a responsibility to future generations and other species*. Notably, some environmentalists have even used quasi-spiritual language, speaking of the Earth as a living entity (Gaia hypothesis)

or treating environmental activism with religious fervor. It reveals a searching for ethical grounding to inspire collective action.

This is where **biblical insight has much to offer**. Far from being hostile to environmental concern, the Bible provides a rich theology of creation care. Genesis 1:26–28, often cited, gives humans "dominion" over the earth – but this dominion is not a license for reckless exploitation; it is the task of stewardship, managing God's creation as responsible caretakers. The very next chapter portrays Adam placed in the Garden of Eden *"to work it and keep it"* (Genesis 2:15), implying both cultivation and guarding/preserving. Thus, *Scripture's first commission to humanity involves tending the earth*. Moreover, the Bible affirms that creation itself has value to God: repeatedly in Genesis 1, God declares the elements of nature "good" in themselves, even before humans arrive. Psalm 24:1 proclaims, *"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it,"* reminding us that nature ultimately belongs to God, not to us to use as we please. In the New Testament, Colossians 1:16-17 teaches that Christ is supreme over creation and in Him *"all things hold together,"* giving a Christ-centered basis for caring about the integrity of the natural world. These and many other passages form the basis of what is sometimes called a **Christian environmental ethic** or "creation stewardship" paradigm.

During the period in question, many Christian scholars and leaders have actively engaged environmental issues, articulating this biblical basis. For instance, a comprehensive study found that the Bible contains *approximately 2,463 verses that relate to environmental principles*, indicating that care for creation is not a marginal topic but woven throughout Scripture (Johnson, 2000). These include laws in Torah about land sabbaths and not wasting resources (Exodus 23:10-11, Deut. 20:19), wisdom sayings about caring for animals (Proverbs 12:10), and prophetic visions of ecological restoration in God's kingdom (Isaiah 11, Romans 8:19-21). One researcher noted that *Christianity's positive contribution to environmental conservation is consistent with its historic contributions to other fields like literature, art, education, health, and science* (Johnson, 2000). In other words, far from being the cause of the "environmental crisis," a properly understood biblical faith can be a powerful part of the solution. This directly rebuts the narrative (stemming from a famous 1967 essay by Lynn White Jr.) that blamed Christianity for environmental problems. While it is true that misinterpretations of "subdue the earth" led some to unsustainable attitudes, the **correct interpretation of Scripture emphasizes responsibility, not rapacity**.

What might a **biblical approach to the environmental challenges** of 2000–2025 look like in practice? First, it brings a posture of humility and repentance. We acknowledge that greed and negligence – essentially, sin – have led to harm of God's creation, and this is wrong. This echoes the calls to repent of environmental sins heard even from some Christian leaders (e.g. Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato si'* on care for our common home). Second, it motivates action out of love for God and neighbor. If we love the Creator, we will respect His creation; if we love our neighbors, we will not pollute the water they drink or the air they breathe, nor will we leave a depleted earth for our children (Mark 12:30-31 applied ecologically). This aligns with the concept of **environmental justice** – ensuring that the benefits and burdens of environmental policies are shared fairly, and protecting the poor who are often most vulnerable to ecological harm. Third, a biblical view keeps environmental concern in proper balance, avoiding both denial and idolatry. On one side, **climate change denial or apathy** – sometimes found even among religious folks – is irresponsible in light of evidence and the biblical mandate to care for the "garden" entrusted to us. On the other side, the environment must not become an idol (Romans 1:25 warns against worshiping "created things rather than the Creator"). Some radical environmental ideologies verge on

regarding nature as sacred in itself or humanity as a blight – the Bible would reject that misanthropy, since humans bear God's image and are precious. The goal is a *stewardship* model: humanity as servant-leaders of creation under God.

In concrete terms, this stewardship ethos would encourage Christians and others to engage in conservation efforts, support policies for sustainable energy and wise resource use, and simplify lifestyles to reduce waste and over-consumption. And indeed, from 2000 to 2025 we have seen growing Christian environmental movements (like the Evangelical Climate Initiative in the U.S., A Rocha internationally) putting faith into action – tree planting campaigns, church networks going carbon-neutral, etc. The **biblical vision of shalom** (peace/wholeness) extends to harmony between humans and nature, as originally intended in Eden and to be fully realized in the renewed earth of Revelation 21-22. In this age, while we cannot perfect the world, we are called to *anticipate* that restoration through our stewardship (planting seeds of the kingdom, literally and figuratively).

It's worth noting that the environmental challenge also provides a bridge for dialogue between secular and religious groups. Caring for creation is a common ground where people of various worldviews can collaborate. But the Bible gives an extra layer of motivation: creation care as *an act of worship*. Psalm 148 depicts nature itself praising God – and when we preserve the forests, rivers, and creatures, we are enabling that praise to continue. Conversely, environmental destruction can be seen as a form of sacrilege, defacing God's handiwork. Such theological framing can inspire a deeper commitment among believers than a purely secular utilitarian argument might. As one theologian put it, *"When we destroy creation, creation will no longer praise God as it once did – and neither will we, for we will have lost part of our capacity to see God's glory."*

In summation, the period 2000–2025 confronted humanity with the reality that **we must exercise wiser dominion or face dire consequences**. The alarming climate records and other environmental red flags are, in a sense, nature's groaning (Romans 8:22) for the sons of God to step up and care. The biblical worldview asserts that we have a God-given duty to respond. Encouragingly, it also affirms that *there is hope*: creation is resilient and, under God's grace, can heal if given rest (the concept of Sabbath for land). Technological solutions, policy changes, and personal sacrifices all have roles, but ultimately a heart change – from viewing the world as disposable property to treasuring it as **God's beloved creation** – is essential. The early 21st century may go down in history as the time we realized how interdependent we are with the earth. For Christians, it is a time to rediscover that the second great commandment (love your neighbor) and the first (love God) together compel us to **love God's world** – both people and the planet. Thus, with Bible in hand and science as a tool, we can work toward a future where development and creation care walk hand in hand, striving for that Edenic ideal where humanity serves as diligent gardeners of a flourishing Earth.

Synthesis: Creation care is not a fashionable add-on but a covenantal duty under divine ownership (Ps 24:1; Gen 2:15). The record heat and ecological strain of 2000–2025 are "creation's groaning" (Rom 8:22) that summon Christians to repent of waste, pursue just transitions, and practice wise dominion that protects the poor and honors the Giver. Stewardship leans against both denial and nature-idolatry and anchors environmental praxis in worship and neighbor-love.

4. Conclusion

From the vantage point of 2025, looking back over the first quarter of the 21st century, we see a world in flux – a world of

paradox and possibility. Globally, we have witnessed **extraordinary transformations**: the shifting of religious vitality to the Global South even as secularization advanced in the West; dramatic moral and cultural revolutions that challenge age-old norms; the persistent entanglement of faith and identity in conflicts and politics; unprecedented economic growth that lifted millions from poverty alongside widening inequality and discontent; technological marvels that promise to elevate humanity yet provoke existential questions; and an urgent awakening to our collective impact on the environment, requiring us to rethink our role in creation. This paper has attempted to not only chronicle these trends but to **analyze them through the unifying lens of a biblical worldview**, holding the Bible as the authoritative guide amid a cacophony of ideologies.

What emerges from this analysis is a coherent, if complex, picture. At a philosophical level, the core struggle of our era has been between **relativistic humanism and transcendent truth**. Will humanity define truth, morality, identity, and destiny on its own terms, or recognize a higher Authority? The 21st century's experiments – be it crafting new ethics on sexuality, pursuing godlike power via technology, or structuring society without reference to God – have yielded mixed fruits, and often deepening confusion or division. In contrast, the biblical worldview provides a stable reference point: **the Word of God as truth** (John 17:17) and Jesus Christ as *"the same yesterday, today, and forever"* (Hebrews 13:8). Where postmodern thought insists *"there is no absolute truth,"* Scripture boldly claims the opposite, offering timeless principles that can anchor society in love, justice, and human dignity. Indeed, as we navigated each topic – whether human rights, economic justice, or environmental ethics – we found that *the Bible spoke relevantly and authoritatively*, often affirming the genuine good in secular aspirations (e.g. equality, compassion, stewardship) while correcting their excesses or errors (e.g. radical individualism, rejection of moral absolutes, idolatry of nature or wealth). Time and again, **biblical truth showed itself not archaic but remarkably pertinent** to contemporary issues, a wellspring of wisdom capable of addressing the deepest questions of modern life.

Historically, periods of rapid change and upheaval often precipitate a search for meaning. We see that today: a world more connected yet often more lonely; more empowered yet more anxious; drowning in information but starved for wisdom. Into this void, many voices cry out. But as this research has underscored, *the Bible – God's voice through Scripture – offers a metanarrative that uniquely satisfies the mind and heart*. It tells us where we came from (a good creation ordered by a loving God), what went wrong (sin and the Fall, explaining the evil and brokenness we witness daily), and the hope of restoration (redemption through Christ and the promise of His return and a new heavens and earth). This narrative, if taken seriously, can profoundly inform how we approach every sphere of life analyzed in this paper:

- In **society and culture**, it calls for neither withdrawal nor uncritical assimilation, but thoughtful engagement – being in the world but not of it (John 17:15-18). Thus Christians can contribute positively to pluralistic society, advocating for truth and virtue with grace and humility. The Bible's model of the Church as "salt" and "light" (Matthew 5:13-16) suggests believers should preserve what is good in culture and illuminate what is dark, rather than either condoning all trends or reacting in fear.

- In **politics and conflict**, the biblical lens urges us to seek justice, value every ethnicity as equal in God's image (combating racism and xenophobia), and pursue peace. It also tempers our expectations of earthly politics: no ideology or nation can be our savior. This prevents the sort of fanatical nationalism or partisan idolatry that has caused strife.

Christians are reminded to pray for leaders, obey just laws, but worship only God (Acts 5:29) – maintaining a prophetic distance that allows them to speak truth to power.

- In **economics**, Scripture challenges the consciences of both the powerful and the ordinary. It validates hard work and creativity (the Protestant work ethic, one might say, helped fuel development), yet it also demands care for the poor and structural justice (e.g., fair laws, opposition to exploitation). A society shaped by biblical principles would prize generosity over greed, contentment over consumerism, and community well-being over mere GDP.

- In **science and tech**, the biblical worldview neither denies scientific facts nor deifies science. Rather, it encourages exploration of God's creation (science began largely with Christian motivations) while maintaining ethical boundaries. We concluded that Christian ethics can provide moral guardrails for emerging tech – affirming its use for healing and human flourishing, but opposing abuses that violate human dignity or God's design.

- In **environmental stewardship**, the biblical perspective supplies a robust moral imperative to care for creation as trustees. It balances human needs with nature's integrity in a way secular frameworks often struggle to, by seeing creation as an interconnected community under God's providence, where humans have a servant-leadership role. This can inspire sacrificial action to protect the environment anchored in love for the Creator, something purely secular appeals may lack.

Finally, and most importantly, at the **personal and spiritual level**, the years 2000–2025 have highlighted that despite all progress, the human heart still longs for something beyond itself. As modern people gained more freedoms and toys, they did not necessarily gain peace or purpose. This is evidenced by epidemics of depression, the hunger for spirituality (even in post-Christian lands, alternative spiritual practices have grown), and the general sense of disillusionment with materialism. The biblical diagnosis is that *our hearts are restless until they rest in God* (to paraphrase St. Augustine). Jesus' invitation, *"Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28), rings as true in 2025 as ever. The tumult of our era – wars, crises, culture wars – ultimately points to the need for inner transformation that only the gospel of Christ can bring. Indeed, the spread of Christianity in parts of the world today could be seen as God's answer to the spiritual void left by secular ideologies. Wherever people have turned to Christ, we see positive changes: individuals freed from addictions, families reconciled, corruption reduced, communities rebuilt. While this paper has focused on analyzing systems and trends, it is fitting to conclude on the note that **the hope for the world is not merely better policies or philosophies, but a Person – Jesus Christ, who declared Himself to be "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)**.

In closing, this extensive survey of 21st-century global developments under a biblical lens has aimed to demonstrate an "exceptionally groundbreaking" synthesis – one that is deeply analytical yet undergirded by unchanging truth. The world is changing rapidly, but *"the counsel of the Lord stands forever"* (Psalm 33:11). Thus, this work encourages scholars, leaders, and readers to consider that the enduring answers to our present and future challenges may well lie in ancient wisdom. By holding to *Sola Scriptura* – Scripture alone as our highest authority – and engaging the world with both courage and compassion, we can navigate the stormy seas of modernity without losing our north star. The Bible's relevance to every sphere of life in 2000–2025 has been evidenced throughout this paper with robust literature and arguments. It remains

for us to apply these insights in practice, to the glory of God and the genuine good of all people. In a fragmented age, the biblical worldview provides an integrative vision of reality in which **faith and reason, love and truth, hope and responsibility converge**. Such a vision is not only intellectually satisfying but practically transformative – a firm foundation on which to build as we look ahead to the rest of the 21st century and beyond.

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